



DESERT DEVIL DISPATCH

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Serving the men and women of Regional Command East, Operation Enduring Freedom - Afghanistan

Oct. 5, 2005

TF White Devil, ANA conduct Operation Nijmegan



Sgt. Chuck D. Meseke

A paratrooper with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment pulls security Sept. 12 during Operation Nijmegan. Nijmegan was a joint operation in Zormat conducted by Afghan National Army Soldiers and paratroopers from 2nd Bn.

By Sgt. Chuck D. Meseke
Editor

ZORMAT, Afghanistan, - Paratroopers from 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, and Afghan National Army Soldiers conducted security patrols and searched for criminals Sept. 12 - 14, throughout the Zormat area.

Operation Nijmegan kicked off with Paratroopers moving in to a village suspected to be housing an enemy organizer.

Staff Sgt. Henry S.

Centeno, a Modesto, Calif. native and squad leader with Company C, 2nd Bn., spoke with local villagers to gather information about the organizer, but the villager would not give a straight answer.

"You just said a minute ago you hadn't seen him in a year, now you are saying you don't know him?" Centeno asked.

"They are lying," he said to Sgt. Joseph P. Hebert, a team leader with Co. C. "Am I supposed to believe that they don't know the guy when they are living in his

compound?"

Hebert agreed; there would be no choice but to search the village with ANA troops.

As the Afghan Soldiers searched each room, Hebert followed afterward supervising his Afghan counterparts.

The search yielded little results aside from a suspicious propaganda cassette tape. The tape was found by a female searcher who noticed a woman waiting to be searched was acting

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Oct. 5, 2005

Devil 6: Election one of many highlights

Col. Patrick J. Donahue II

Combined Task Force Devil Commander



Col. Patrick J. Donahue

On Sept. 18 Afghanistan had its first ever National Assembly Provincial Council Elections. This historic event is a testament to the resolve and commitment of Coalition forces, Afghan security forces and the

Afghan people to continue the march to progress in this country.

Although the success of the elections could be the highpoint of our deployment, Afghan forces and Combined Task Force Devil have much more to be proud of.

Regional Command East and Afghan forces have discovered and defused more than 100 improvised explosive devices since we have been here. We have also discovered and facilitated the turn-in of over 200 caches, eliminating Afghanistan of thousands of small-arms ammunition, mortars, rockets and other munitions. Nearly half of the IEDs and caches have been discovered and turned in by Afghans—a great sign that they are taking charge of their own security and won't tolerate the ACM forces destroying this security.

CTF Devil has also worked with the Afghan National Army and Police to help develop them into a more effective fighting force over the last four months. Coalition forces have started the switch from leading operations to supporting Afghan operations. Most of our operations are now conducted with Afghan forces. We have trained over 6,800 Afghan Police Officers in vehicle searches, conducting vehicle check points, handling suspects and general area security.

We also helped the Office of Security Cooperation, Afghanistan by distributing more than 4,000 new AK-47s and over 50 new police vehicles and motorcycles to the ANP.

More importantly, we have emboldened Afghan security forces to conduct unilateral operations against important targets. Now, instead of picking up platoons of ANA or ANP to take on an operation, we pick up terrorists at ANP jails whom they detained during their own operations.

CTF Devil could fight this war by ourselves for the next 10 years and get nowhere. We need to motivate, train and mentor Afghans to fight the enemy on their own; we need to turn this fight over to the people who are best able to defeat the enemy here—the Afghans. Afghan forces will continue to improve as we train and work with them. Once we have security, Afghanistan can progress in all other areas.

As a result of increased Afghan dialogue and negotiations with its enemies, over 200 enemy fighters in eastern Afghanistan have decided to surrender and reconcile with the Government of Afghanistan through the PTS program. Now, they can take part and assist in creating a free and peaceful Afghanistan. It is only a matter of time before the rest follow.

By providing security, CTF Devil has been able to assist in the reconstruction of Afghanistan through various projects over the last four months. We have helped build 71 schools for women, men and children to attend. We have assisted in refurbishing and constructing 44 mosques across eastern Afghanistan. We have drilled 46 wells to provide fresh running water to remote villages, significantly improving their living conditions (some villagers would have to walk up to a mile for potable water). Coalition forces have also assisted in 35 road

projects, linking communities and enhancing Afghan commerce, trade and travel, along with building systems that will lead to even greater progress. In remote areas, where machinery can't reach, Afghans are building roads with hand tools and are clearly showing their commitment to climb out the 25 years of destruction brought by war.

All these projects have employed Afghan contactors and workers, which provided them with work, giving them the skills needed to spearhead their own reconstruction projects in the future.

RC East has also provided many Afghans with healthcare and medical attention. We have conducted 42 Medical Civil Assistance Programs where we treated and distributed much needed medications to thousands of Afghan men, women and children. Afghan doctors have accompanied Coalition medical staffs on these visits to improve and exchange their medical techniques and procedures. This is the only medical treatment some Afghans receive due to the remoteness of their villages.

We have accomplished much, but we still have much to do. Don't become complacent. We need to remember there is still work to be done here. The enemy is still dangerous and is trying to disrupt our efforts to reconstruct this country and build the Afghan security capacity. We need to stay focused and help them find and defeat the enemy. Security is the precondition for peace and significant reconstruction projects two to three years from now.

I am very proud of how well we have done up to this point in our deployment, and I will expect nothing less for the remainder of our deployment. Afghanistan is at a critical point in its history—we Devils are up to the task to help the Afghan people rebuild their country.

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IED fails to deter election check point

By Spc. Tiffany Evans
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SHAMBULLAH, Afghanistan - Shortly after Afghan National Army Soldiers had set up a vehicle control point in a wadi near Shambullah an explosion disrupted the morning calm.

"I had just switched to the gunner position to help pull added security when I noticed a car passing me," said Army Spc. Aaron Pearson, driver, Company D, 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment. "As the car passed an alcove of trees I saw and heard a small explosion."

Immediately after the explosion, the car stopped for a minute or two and then drove off. Soldiers from Companies B and D, 2nd Bn., said that the occupants of the car looked like they were reassuring themselves that they weren't hurt.

"The dismounts from B Co. and Army Staff Sgt. Thomas Reed, section leader, D Co., 2-504th, headed up the side of the wadi in search of anyone who might have set off the improvised explosive device and to perform a security sweep of the area," said Pearson. "ANA Soldiers were blocking traffic and helping to



Spc. Tiffany Evans

Paratroopers from Companies B and D, 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment scale the side of the wadi after an IED exploded near their vehicle control point Sept. 18.

perform the security sweep."

As all this was going on Army Staff Sgt. Robert Wiery, platoon sergeant with D Co., was radioing as much information as possible about the blast to the B Co. base camp.

"After I radioed what had just happened, I made sure my remaining Soldiers were pulling security and headed over to where I thought the

blast originated from," said Wiery. "On the way over I ran into the team of Soldiers who were doing the security sweep and they pointed out a possible spot of origin."

After Wiery looked at the spot, he decided that it wasn't a blast spot and continued looking until he came upon the alcove of trees. The Soldiers said that one of the trees had a fresh black spot and array of debris was blasted out from the alcove.

"When the Soldiers had finished their security sweep I sent (Staff Sgt. Thomas) Reed to talk to the owner of one of the nearby compounds, while the rest of us searched for clues to what type of IED it was and what caused it to explode," said Wiery.

Coalition Soldiers searched the small wooded area looking for wires and timing devices. The ANA found part of timer and the Paratroopers found the wires.

"We think that the IED was a rocket propelled grenade round that was buried under-

neath a burlap sack, trash and a big rock," said Reed. "The local officials promised to bring tea and bread down to the VCP and give us information on the IED."

A few hours after the explosion local officials brought the promised refreshments. As the officials shared their tea and bread they told the Soldiers what little they knew about the IED and who might have set it up.

"The rest of the afternoon went by pretty smoothly and there were no other incidents," said Reed. "ANA Soldiers manned the check-point until ballots had passed them and then closed up shop and returned to base camp with us to receive instructions for our next mission."

Daily U.S. Soldiers are helping to train ANA Soldiers to fight and defend their own country. With each new mission and operation that the ANA leads the way on the sooner, they will be able to defend their country with less help from Coalition Forces.



Spc. Tiffany Evans

Staff Sgt. Thomas Reed, squad leader, D Company, Task Force White Devil, talks to the owner of compound near where an improvised explosive device exploded.

TF Red Falcon provides election security

By Spc. Mike Pryor

Task Force Red Falcon PAO

LOGAR, Afghanistan - The final count-down to Afghanistan's national provincial elections had begun, and Lt. Col. David Anders, commander of the 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, knew the success or failure of his entire deployment depended on what happened over the next few days. At the last meeting before the elections with his senior staff, he told them what he expected.

"Gentlemen, this is the reason why we're here. I know the boys are ready to go . . . Full Court press the next six days," Anders instructed his men.

Full court press was exactly what he got. On Sep. 15, three days before Election Day, the Paratroopers of Task Force Red Falcon moved out into sectors throughout Logar and Wardak Provinces in Eastern Afghanistan to secure almost 250 polling sites and prevent enemy forces from disrupting the democratic process as part of "Operation Vigilant Sentinel."

The Red Falcons had deployed from Fort Bragg, NC in July specifically for this mission.

From the moment the order for "Vigilant Sentinel" was issued, the tempo of operations was relentless. Every rifle platoon, as well as the mortars, engineers, scouts, and other elements, had a mission. Each was responsible for securing multiple polling centers. Working together with counterparts from the Afghan National Army, they

did combat and security patrols, inspected polling sites, established traffic control points, escorted convoys carrying election materials, and cleared routes to make sure they were free of improvised explosive devices.

For the Paratroopers from 2nd Platoon, Bravo Company, based in Puli Alam District in Logar, the mission seemed to pass by in a blur of frenetic activity. They had 16 polling centers to cover over 60 miles, and they were on the move constantly.

"(We're on the road all day), then we come back in and try to get a few hours of sleep, and then we get up and do it all over again the next day," said Sgt. Michael Mullikin.

After four days of bumping around on dirt roads in the back of a cargo vehicle, some of Mullikin's team had so much grime and dust caked on their faces you could scrape it off with an e-tool.

But keeping clean was the last thing on anyone's mind, because in this crucial period, the danger for coalition forces was elevated. Enemy forces were determined to mar the elections with terrorist attacks, and intelligence sources indicated that they would be in the Red Falcons area of operation.

"We are being targeted," Anders warned his men.

With an attack on their Forward Operating Base in Wardak seemingly imminent, the Red Falcons went on high alert. Every Paratrooper who could walk and fire a weapon stood guard at night, scanning the wadis and mountains around them with night vision devices.

"Bring 'em on - I've got 1,500 rounds and a spare barrel," said Spc. William Schene of Headquarters Platoon, Headquarters Company as he manned a .50 cal at the front gate.

Sgt. Jeremy Denardo of Bravo Company was one of about 15 Falcons who volunteered to walk a dismounted reconnaissance patrol in the area, despite the fact that he had been wounded in the shoulder by an IED attack a few days before.

"I'm not even supposed to be carrying a weapon, but I don't want everybody else to have to pick up my slack," Denardo said.

But the attack on the FOB never came.



Spc. Mike Pryor

Lt. Ross Kinkead (left) and Spc. Clayto Gouard prepare to set up an overwatch position during a recon and surveillance patrol in support of Operation Rock the Vote Sep. 17.

Instead, the enemy chose to strike on the roads. An IED shredded a vehicle from 1st Platoon, Bravo Company Sep. 13, slightly injuring five Paratroopers. The very next day, members of 2nd Platoon, Bravo Company discovered and disarmed a vehicle rigged with two anti-tank mines near their compound, narrowly averting an attack.

There were also several reports of IEDs that turned out to be false alarms, but that didn't make things any less tense for the paratroopers who had to investigate them.

"When you're out there checking them out, your mind can start playing tricks on you - Like, is that a twig or a piece of wire?" Mullikin said.

But despite the threats, the Red Falcons and the Afghan National Security Forces would not be deterred from their mission. On Election Day, people all over Logar and Wardak awoke to the sight of armored American Humvees and pick-up trucks full of Afghan Soldiers speeding by on their way to and from polling centers. Fifteen hours later, long after the last vote had been cast, Paratroopers were still out on the roads making sure all the ballots made it safely to their final destination.

"Although the elections are over, the Red Falcons' mission continues. Enemy forces are still active, and as long as the votes are being counted, the threat of an attack remains. But in some ways the elections can already be called a success. And part of the credit for that has to go to the hard work of the Red Falcons," said 1st Lt. Grant Jerry, Bravo Company's Executive Officer.

"It was really the professionalism of our soldiers and the ability of team leaders and squad leaders to operate independently that enabled us to cover such a huge area. To the last man, everyone performed outstandingly. It's something they'll always be able to remember with pride," Jerry said.



Spc. Mike Pryor

Paratroopers from, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment and soldiers from the Afghan National Army man a checkpoint in Logar Province.

PRT learns life-saving lessons



Sgt. Chuck D. Meseke

Pfc. Samuel Long performs a "fireman's carry" while training as a part of the Desert Responder course Sept. 11 at the Gardez Provincial Reconstruction Team.

By Sgt. Chuck D. Meseke
Editor

GARDEZ PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM, Afghanistan- Maj. Randy Castillo, commander of the Gardez Provincial Reconstruction Team's Civil Affairs Team, let out a low grunt and pushed with all his might, but the simulated casualty draped over his shoulders wouldn't come off the ground.

He was attempting a "fireman's carry," one of the military's oldest techniques of carrying a wounded comrade on the battlefield. Every Soldier has done it at least a few times, but not quite like the Gardez PRT's Soldiers training in the Devil Responder course.

Castillo was trying to lift another person with a helmet, body armor, a full load of ammunition and equipment as well as his own and the casualty's weapon. With all the added weight of a standard equipment load

he was virtually squatting like a weightlifter trying to put up over 200 lbs on his shoulders not in the form of a barbell, but an awkward limp human body.

Castillo's troubles while trying to perform traditional buddy aide was just one example of why troops fighting in the Global War On Terror needed additional training in the area of first aid to deal with new equipment and the type of warfare facing Soldiers today, according to Maj. Steven McGill, a Hondo, Texas native and the PRT's senior medical officer.

McGill then instructed the Soldiers on how they would most likely come upon a casualty and what to do in real world situations that Coalition Forces have found themselves in.

Instead of working alone to carry a wounded trooper, the Soldiers worked together by providing covering fire onto the enemy as someone simply grabbed the loop on the upper back of the wounded Soldier's body armor and dragged the casualty out of the kill zone. They practiced multiple scenarios including removing Soldiers from vehicles that were disabled by explosives.

"There is an old saying in military medicine, 'the best medicine on any battlefield is fire superiority' and we don't forget to teach that in this course," McGill said.

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Spc. Mike Pryor

Splash...

A Humvee carrying paratroopers from B Co, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, makes a splash while navigating through a creek on a recon of polling sites in Karwar, Logar Province, Afghanistan, Sep. 2.

Father, son share Afghan combat experience

By **Spc. Mike Pryor**

Task Force Red Falcon PAO

LOGAR, Afghanistan - For years Afghanistan was a place Aleksey Ivanovich Butkov just wanted to forget.

Butkov, a truck driver who lives in Portland, Oregon, fought there as a soldier in the Russian Army during the early 1980's and came away sick of war. He tried to put Afghanistan behind him, as the years passed. When Aleksey Alekseyevich, his first-born son, grew old enough to ask him questions about the war, Aleksey Sr., would just change the subject.

But now Afghanistan is at the front of his mind once again. Today that same son who used to ask him questions about the war is now Pfc. Aleksey Alekseyevich Butkov. He is serving in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom with the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division. Like his father, Aleksey Jr. is a driver.

"I don't know if it's in the blood or destiny, but it's a pretty weird coincidence. He did it 25 years ago with his Army and I'm doing it 25 years later in this Army. It's pretty cool. It's something me and my dad have in common," Aleksey, Jr. said.

The Butkov's military service in Afghanistan may have brought them together, but the paths that brought them both to serve there were very different.

Aleksey Sr. was born in 1964 in the Ukraine, when the U.S.S.R. was at the height of its power. He became a soldier when he was 18. It was not his decision - military service was mandatory in the Soviet Union.

"I served because I had to serve. I had no choice. The faster I finished my service the faster I could go home," he said.

From 1982 - 1984 he served in the Soviet-Afghan War, driving armored personnel carriers on convoys near the Pakistan border.

"What I have to go through is not nearly as difficult as what he went through," said Aleksey Jr. "It was bloodier. His convoys were ambushed all the time. It

was basically like ducks in a row."

After he was discharged, Aleksey Sr., returned to his hometown in the Ukraine to get married and raise a family. Aleksey Jr., was born a year later, and another son two years after that.

When communism fell in the 1990's, it didn't bring the opportunities everyone expected. Work was scarcer than ever and the Butkovs worried about what kind of future their children would have. They had relatives living in the U.S., and the family decided to move there. They were chasing the American Dream, Aleksey Jr. said.

The family settled in Portland, Oregon in 1994, when Aleksey, Jr. was in the third grade. His father eventually found work as a truck driver, putting the skills he learned in the Russian Army to use.

Aleksey Jr. grew up as a typical American kid. He became so Americanized that when he visited his hometown as a teenager, he felt out of place.

"I realized I didn't belong in the Ukraine anymore," he said.

One place he did feel he belonged was in the U.S. Army. In the back of his head, Aleksey, Jr., wanted to be a soldier to satisfy the curiosity his father's silence had left him with.

"I was always curious about the conflict (in Afghanistan). I asked my dad a lot of questions but all he'd say is, 'It was no good.' Maybe he didn't want to answer the questions then because he thought I was too immature," he said.

In March 2003, Aleksey Jr., enlisted in the Army. He spent two years in the reserves before reclassifying for active duty as a Paratrooper with the 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, and 82nd Airborne Division. Three days after joining the unit, he learned he was deploying.

"When I heard we were getting deployed, I was hoping it would be to Afghanistan," he said.

It was. Aleksey Jr.'s battalion was sent to Afghanistan in July



Spc. Mike Pryor

Pfc. Alexey "Alex" Butkov from Portland, Oregon, a paratrooper with B Company, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, pulls guard in a sandbagged bunker at the edge of his platoon's compound in Puli Alam, Logar Province, Afghanistan in September.

of 2005 to bolster security in advance of the September provincial elections. His platoon is based near the small town of Puli Alam, in the eastern province of Logar.

Since arriving in Afghanistan, Aleksey, Jr., has seen reminders of his father's war everywhere. Broken down Russian vehicles line the roads he drives along every day. He was excited the first time he saw an old armored personnel carrier like the one his father used to drive.

"I can't wait to go back and talk to my dad and show him pictures of where I've been," he said.

On patrols through the dusty little town of Puli Alam, he is often reminded of his hometown of Sverdlosk. Sights that strike other members of his platoon as primitive - meat hanging on hooks outside in the sun, the commotion of the bazaar, women and children drawing water from a well - evoke fond memories for him.

"It seems strange to them, but I grew up with that," he said.

Aleksey Jr., also has the advantage of his father's wisdom. When he calls home, he and his dad don't talk about how friends are doing or which team is headed to the playoffs, they talk about the best way to

avoid IEDs on the road. Gone are the days when Aleksey Sr., wouldn't discuss his war experiences with his son.

As a veteran, Aleksey Sr., didn't want his son to go to war. But now that Aleksey Jr., is in Afghanistan, he hopes he can gain something positive from it.

"I didn't want him to go because there's no good there . . . There's no difference. It's the same war," he said. "But I'm proud of him. The experience is good. He will learn what it means to serve."

Like his father before him, Aleksey Jr., misses his family and his wife, Luda, and can't wait to return to them.

"My heart is at home. Every time I'm away I realize how special they are," he said.

But unlike his father, Aleksey Jr. volunteered for his mission, and believes in the rightness of what he is trying to accomplish.

"I hope we make a difference. I'm glad we're helping (the Afghans) to have a life where they have a choice and aren't just told what to do," he said.

His son's optimism may even have checked Aleksey Sr.'s cynicism a little. He now sees a glimmer of a future for Afghanistan.

"The Russians couldn't help Afghanistan, maybe the Americans can," he said.

Troops awarded for valor, wounds

By **Sgt. Chuck D. Meseke**
Editor

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan- Paratroopers from Company B, 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, were awarded two Bronze Star Medals for valor, an Army Commendation Medal for valor, and three Purple Hearts for wounds received in combat during an awards ceremony 24 Sept., at the Battalion's headquarters.

Staff Sgt. Adam Flynn and Sgt. Lewis Harvey were awarded the BSM with valor device for their actions during a firefight June 10, during operations to clear the Mane Kandow Pass near the Pakistan border.

Pfc. Michael Lobo was awarded the Army Commendation Medal with valor device for his actions during an ambush May 21, near Camp Tillman where despite being wounded, he continuously engaged the enemy.

Staff Sgt. Jesse Landazuri and Pfc. Michael Adzima were awarded the Purple Heart for wounds they received during a July 13, firefight near Lwara.

Pfc. Ted Smith was awarded the Purple Heart for wounds he received during a firefight June 25, near Lwara.

After the brief ceremony Harvey thanked his squad while they congratulated him on his award.

"This was a privilege and I wish everyone in my squad

could have gotten an award," he said.

"I didn't have to do my job

or give orders, everyone did what they were supposed to do," Harvey said.



Sgt. Chuck D. Meseke

Staff Sgt. Jesse Landazuri, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, is awarded the Purple Heart by Lt. Col. George Donovan Sept. 24 during a ceremony at the Battalion headquarters.

On the air with Red Falcon Radio

By **Spc. Mike Pryor**
Task Force Red Falcon PAO

WARDAK, AFGHANISTAN - People in Wardak like their radios. Ever since 82nd Airborne Division paratroopers began handing out free crank powered radios in the province last month, clusters of young men yelling "Radio! Radio!" show up wherever they go. Children run behind Humvees hoping someone tosses a radio out to them. Sometimes even Afghan policemen will slide up to one of the paratroopers and whisper, "Mister - radio?"

Yes, people in Wardak like their radios very much. And now, thanks to the Coalition they have their very own radio station, too.

Radio Rasul, is an Arabic word meaning "message," is a mobile radio station operated by the 82nd's 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment and the 44th Signal Battalion that broadcasts music, news, public service announcements, and other information provided by the Wardak Provincial Government to the local population.

The radio station gives the government a way to promote itself and its programs to the local people, the majority of whom don't read and don't have access to TVs, said Lt. Col. David Anders, Commander, 1-325.

"(Radio Rasul) is for the benefit of the people of Wardak, to get the word out to a populace that is mostly illiterate," Anders said.

The radio station made its first broadcast Sep. 16 and has been running from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. every day since then. It broadcasts over the FM bandwidth and has a range of 40 to 60 km. The station is totally mobile and can be used anywhere as long as it has a power source. The programming is pre-recorded and then beamed out over the airwaves in a continuous loop.

Its format is a mixture of music and news. Traditional Afghan songs are interspersed with news updates, weather information, religious programming and messages from government officials.

One of the first officials to record a message for Radio Rasul was the provincial governor, Gov. Abdul Jabbar Naeemi. Having a radio station in Wardak has long been a top priority of his administration, Naeemi said.

Before becoming governor, Naeemi had been one of Afghan President Hamid Karzai's most successful campaign managers. His experiences in politics taught him that a big factor in building support for the government is keeping the populace informed of its activities, he said.



Pfc. Mike Pryor

Sgt. Jennifer Hahn, FM Radio Team Chief, 44th Signal Battalion, uses her computer to edit recorded messages for broadcast on Radio Rasul, a portable radio station operated by Task Force Red Falcon and the Wardak, Afghanistan government.

See "Radio" page 9

PRT helps bring light to Sharan

By **Spc. Laura E. Griffin**
Assitant Editor

SHARAN PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM, Afghanistan - "Ready, three, two, one, flip" said Lt. Col. Gordon Obermueller, the Sharan Provincial Reconstruction Team commander.

Afghans gathered in downtown Sharan, Afghanistan and turned their eyes skyward to feel the warm glow of streetlights for the first time.

It was just about three hours after the last polling stations closed Sept. 18 that Obermeuller and Governor Gulab Mangal, governor of Paktika Province, flipped on the switch for the new power grid in Sharan.

The power grid, with its 11 kilometers of power lines and 65 power polls, services 200 shops in the town, the 24-room Sharan Hospital and some 700 residences in the area.

"We started this project Aug. 15 and employed 953 people, including 630 skilled workers," said Staff Sgt. Robert Borden, a project coordinator with the 492nd Civil Affairs Battalion. "Most of our projects usually have a 9:1 unskilled workers to



Spc. Laura E. Griffin

Lt. Col. Gordon Obermueller, the Sharan Provincial Reconstruction Team Commander, shakes hands with Governor Gulab Mangal, governor of Paktika Province, moments after the switch was flipped to turn on the power in Sharan, Afghanistan Sept. 18.

skilled workers ratio, but this was such a knowledge-intensive project that we needed many more skilled workers."

"This project went fairly smoothly right up until the end when we had a little fuel problem with the generator," said Borden. "But with the helpful advice from some Kellogg, Brown and Root generator mechanics, we were able to get it up and running (nearly) on schedule."

Joseph Weeks, the KBR generator mechanic who gave the helpful advice, understands the difference that this power grid is making for the community.

"We essentially brought them from the 14th century up to the 19th century with the flick of a switch," he said. "I wouldn't go so far as to say that they've reached the 21st century yet, but they're getting there."

Yousuf Khusti, a general contractor who has an office in Sharan, sees the power grid as a huge step toward

progress for the town.

"Everybody is very happy about the grid," said Khusti through an interpreter. "Sharan is the commercial center of the Paktika Province, the town is more modern now with power, as it should be. This is a very backward province, but the power grid is bringing us forward."

Among the benefits that the locals will experience from having a power grid are savings on petrol they have been using to fuel personal generators, said Khusti.

"Soon I can hook up my computer and radio in my office," said Khusti, who is not yet hooked up to the grid, but plans to be soon.

As with all PRT projects, the question of sustainability by the new Afghan government must be addressed before the project can be started.

"The contractor has 800 electricity meters for those people who would like to have electricity hooked up to their

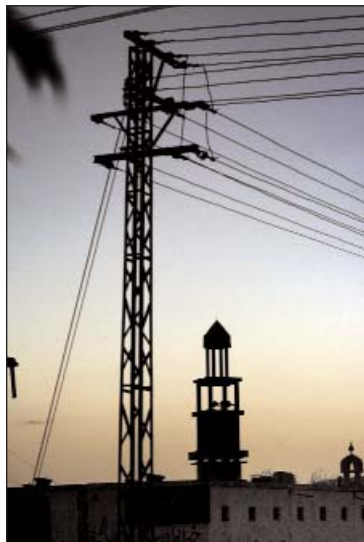
business or home," said Borden. "All government buildings, including the hospital, will have meters automatically installed."

The meters will help the government to keep track of usage and to charge its customers accordingly to pay for the 100 liters per hour that the generator will burn when it is running at max capacity.

"This generator makes enough power to expand the town of Sharan to five times its current size," said Weeks. "We've designed the system to last for well into the future."

To keep people from illegally hooking up electricity to their homes or businesses, the lines will be checked once a month. If violators are found, they will be charged for their usage, the lines will be disconnected, and they could also be fined.

The generator producing the power will also be guarded 24 hours a day to prevent anyone from pillaging its parts or sabotaging the power supply.



Spc. Laura E. Griffin

A new power pole and power lines are silhouetted against the evening sky in Sharan, Afghanistan.

Radio

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"(Through the media), the people can be made aware of the government and the activities of the government officials. They can even be made aware of the mistakes of the government," Naeemi said.

But when he became Governor, Naeemi found there was no reliable method of informing the people of Wardak about the government's programs. There was no radio station, no TV and no newspaper. And the effect of their absence was obvious, he said.

"When I first arrived, there were people in some districts who were not aware of whom the Governor was, who the coalition soldiers were. They were far away from modern life," he said.

He thought a radio station could help change that.

A poor farmer who can't read or write who listens to the radio all day can become as informed as a college graduate, Naeemi said.

"In a way, they're much better educated than a person with a PhD in Kabul.

They're (government) analysts," he said.

When the 1-325 began operations in the area in July, Naeemi presented the idea to Anders. Anders said he would do his best to make it a reality.

"I promised the Governor I would get him a radio station before the (Sep. 18) elections," Anders said.

Anders made a special request to have the equipment and a team from the 44th Signal Battalion brought in to install the antenna at the Falcons' Forward Operating Base.

It took only seconds for Radio Rasul's first broadcast to reach radios all over Wardak, but the process of creating the programming took a bit longer. It began with Sgt. Jennifer Hahn, her recording equipment, and a cramped, little room in the basement of the Governor's office in Wardak.

Inside, Hahn, FM radio team chief, 44th Signal Battalion, and Capt. Jeffrey Giltzow, Red Falcon civil-military operations officer, supervised the recordings of minute-long news and information segments by a parade of government offi-

cials and religious representatives.

"Without an interpreter it was like a three-ring circus in there. But we worked it all out," Giltzow said.

The recording session was an occasionally surreal collision of modern technology and tradition. At one point, a young cleric dressed in a turban and robes sang verses from the Koran into a microphone attached to Hahn's high-tech computer. His verses and the other statements were saved into the computer to be replayed later.

At 7 a.m. Sep. 16, those verses from the Koran were the first messages transmitted out of Radio Rasul 45-foot high antenna inside FOB North. The radio waves reached out all over the province, including to areas where 1-325 paratroopers were busy conducting support operations for the provincial elections.

Although it is too soon to know what the lasting effects of the radio station will be, Naeemi has high hopes for the role it can play in Wardak's future.

"It can be a voice of the people," he said.

Responder

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During the course Soldiers were taught decompression tension of the pneumothorax, intra-venous fluids administration, use of haemostatic dressings, calling in for medical evacuation, use of the combat application tourniquet, intubations of the nasal airway and other skills, McGill said.

Much of the course focused heavily on the treatment of hemorrhages to the arms and legs.

"Because of the Improved Body Armor we don't see as many penetrating torso wounds as we used to," McGill said.

Part of training to care for injuries in the extremities was doing away with old Army doctrine of on the concept of tourniquets.

"We have to dispel the myth that the tourniquet is a last resort," said McGill. "A tourniquet is the quickest way to stop bleeding and will not cause permanent damage to the limb if not left on for an extended period of time."

Traditional buddy aid and Combat Lifesaver Course training is not completely

obsolete. The Devil Responder course is meant to supplement a Soldier's already basic knowledge, McGill said.

"This is a lot more in depth than any of the training I had up to this point," said Pfc. Mathew Tillman, a Phoenix native and civil affairs specialist at Gardez.

"(The course) will increase the survivability of my unit

on the battlefield," Tillman added.

The goal of the Gardez PRT is to have 90 percent of all troops go through the Devil Responder course. It's especially important for the outpost that is home to infantry, civil affairs and transportation troops that spend much of their time in Afghanistan outside of the base.

On the final day of their

training, the Soldiers put their knowledge into practice. They conducted a patrol to the PRT's nearby small-arms range where they came upon their simulated casualties. They were tested on how well they engaged targets at the range with live ammunition to suppress the enemy, treat the casualties and call in for medical evacuation.



Sgt. Chuck D. Meseke

Soldiers remove a simulated casualty from a damaged vehicle during training as part of the Desert Responder course Sept. 11 at the Gardez Provincial Reconstruction Team.

Up Front & Centered: Stop look and listen

By Master Sgt. Geoffrey Carter
Combined Task Force Devil PAO

I had a catharsis today and no it did not hurt. I learned something about human nature and myself, and what was most important is how it was learned. I listened.

I don't always listen but I do make a conscience effort to improve everyday. Did you know that the average person spends 70 percent of their waking day in verbal communication and 45 percent of that time is spent listening. Yet unless you've had specific training in listening techniques your efficiency in use of this skill is only at a 25 percent level.

Dr. Paul Rankin of Ohio State University discovered we spend 70 percent of our day in four types of verbal communication. Of this 70 percent, 9 percent is spent in writing, 16 percent in reading, 30 percent in speaking and 45 percent listening. Our American school system however has its emphasis in reverse order. This is why we have such a hard time listening and hearing people.

The consequences of poor communication and listening are numerous, costly, and frightening. Think of the impact to your unit or organization if

work is misdirected, goals are misunderstood and not achieved, instructions are carried out incorrectly or not at all, or if relationships and trust are weakened instead of strengthened. Not a pretty picture. Here are a couple of areas to avoid that make you a bad listener.

1) When you're introducing a speaker as having a subject that is interesting it turns off the listener. They want to make up their own mind.

2) When you begin to criticize a speaker's delivery your mind starts to tune into some other subject.

3) Don't get over stimulated or too excited about people and things. If they say something that you don't agree with you start to mentally prepare a challenge and miss other points to their conversation that may have answered your challenge.

4) Don't tolerate distraction. You need to ignore the audio and visual distractions and stay focused on the presentation

5) Wasting thought power is probably the biggest distraction to good listening. On the average, Americans speak 125 words a minute. When we speak to a group, we may slow down to 100 words per minute. People listen at between

400-500 words per minute and sometimes as many as 750. In other words, if a speaker maintains an average speed of 150 WPM, then listeners will want to go somewhere mentally at a pace five times that of the speaker.

So when you hear that a speaker has lost their audience it is not as much the subject matter as it is the speaker's slow delivery. This is why our average listening efficiency level is only 25 percent. To improve this we need to concentrate on what the speaker has to say, commit to learning something new, and make mental summaries of key points. Do you hear what I'm saying?

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Are you an aspiring writer or photographer? We want to use your stories and photos in the Desert Devil Dispatch to highlight the great things the men and women of Regional Command-East are doing. For more information, e-mail Master Sgt. Geoffrey Carter at carterg@cjtf76.centcom.mil.

Nijmegan

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strangely. The woman was searched and the tape uncovered.

Some of the paratroopers said they could tell from the start of the mission how it was going to turn out.

"The people staring at us, not smiling and waving; you can tell it isn't going to be a good mission," said Pfc. Ken Orisek, a Chicago native and squad automatic weapon gunner with Co. C.

Paratroopers made the best of the operation even though there were no tangible results.

"We try to have a good time regardless, and it is nice to help the ANA along with their progress," Orisek said.

After the search of the village was completed, the troops headed out to a local bazaar that was rumored to be frequented by enemy forces looking for supplies to sustain their terrorism tactics

against Afghanistan and Coalition Forces.

Nothing was found at the market, but a clear message was sent according to Capt. Jody Shouse, a Fayetteville, N.C. native and Co. C commander. The enemy would have to do their shopping somewhere else, thanks to ANA soldiers.

The operation did validate the ANA and showed the local Afghans that Afghan and Coalition forces care about their district.

"The locals need to see their Soldiers actively involved in operations," said 2nd Lt. Michael Filanowski a Shelton, Conn. native and platoon leader with Company C.

"Today we helped these Afghans become better Soldiers," he added.

As the operation wrapped up, ANA Soldiers distributed truckloads of humanitarian assistance items to a local village elder that had helped the troops on previous missions in the area.



Sgt. Chuck D. Meseke

Second Lt. Michael Filanowski, Task Force White Devil questions a boy about photos found in his house Sept. 12 during Operation Nijmegan.